



# D6マガジン

d6::Magazine



**ものである。冒険とオープンD6ゲームの記事。**  
**Be Anything. Adventures and Articles in Open D6 Gaming.**

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Cover Art Illustrated by Rich Woodall  
Edited by Brett M. Pisinski

As the d6 Magazine heads in a new direction, we will continue to grow and expand with each issue. Like everything, we're not immune to the effects of growing pains, it will be a process for everyone involved, but these are exciting times for d6 gaming! I would like to thank the online d6 community in their efforts for helping spread the word and involvement. The d6 System itself has gone through many changes since its initial conception in the late '70s, to the height of its popularity when West End Games held the Star Wars license to the OpenD6 OGL that we have now. The future of d6 gaming is looking very bright, with all the talented minds we have now. I am looking forward to working with everyone as we begin to push the boundaries of our imaginations while we continue to challenge ourselves.

Never stop dreaming, anything is possible. Roll for initiative!

Respectfully,  
- Brett M. Pisinski





## Talking with Peter Schweighofer

by Jeremy Streeter



“I created my own  
“roleplaying game”  
based on watching  
two neighborhood  
kids “play” D&D...”

*D6 Magazine:* Can you give us a little background about yourself and your relationship with role-playing games, specifically D6 gaming?

*Peter:* I’ve been gaming since Basic and Expert D&D in 1982, got a bachelor’s degree in creative writing, and spent three years reporting and editing at a weekly, hometown newspaper before West End Games hired me to establish and run *The Official Star Wars Adventure Journal* supporting its Star Wars roleplaying game. During my five years there before the company’s infamous collapse and bankruptcy I edited the journal, helped

oversee the editorial staff, worked conventions, authored or contributed material to a number of games and sourcebooks -- including the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game, 2nd Edition Revised & Expanded*, *Platt’s Starport Guide*, the *Raiders of the Lost Ark Sourcebook*, *Instant Adventures* -- and generally contributed opinions and guidance on numerous game projects West End developed.

Afterward I worked as a freelance writer for numerous other projects in the gaming industry, including some supplements for Purgatory Publishing’s re-launch of the D6 System line (*D6 Space: Ships* and *D6 Space: Aliens*). Throughout this time, I ran D6 System games at area conventions I attended as a gaming guest, from Star Wars D6 games to D6 adaptations of my own Any-System Key materials like *Pulp Egypt* and *Heroes of Rura-Tonga*. Today I focus on my own gaming projects through Griffon Publishing Studio, including roleplaying and board games, though none of are tailored to use the D6 System.

*D6 Magazine:* When did you start developing game material?

*Peter:* Like most inspired gamers, I created my own settings and adventures when I finished digesting the officially published material available to me. The original Basic and Expert D&D modules practically encouraged this, from providing the Caves of the Unknown to populate in B2: The Keep on the Borderlands to a huge world map (and ocean full of islands) to explore and develop in X1: The Isle of Dread. But just before I immersed myself in D&D I created my own “roleplaying game” based on watching two neighborhood kids “play” D&D, which consisted of the player looking at the full and open scenario map, noting which rooms he was exploring, and the dungeon master looking up the appropriate entry and resolving combat. The game I developed based on these observations, *Creatures & Caverns*, consisted of independent players (either wizards or knights) exploring a map, vanquishing monsters with weapons or spells, and collecting loot and experience points. Many years later, I published a more polished, free version online, though it pales in comparison to anything resembling even the most basic roleplaying game.

*D6 Magazine:* What led you to join West End Games?

*Peter:* I’d always wanted to work professionally in the roleplaying game industry, but my early attempts failed because the positions required more practical publishing experience than a small, liberal arts college

writing program provided. After two years reporting and a year editing a weekly newspaper -- with experience managing schedules, editing, personnel, layout and other practicalities -- I felt I would again send my resume and career materials to West End Games seeking an editorial position. Unbeknownst to me the company was looking to start a Star Wars game periodical within the scope of its license with Lucasfilm, in the form of a quarterly journal. My background as a newspaper editor and lifelong Star Wars fan certainly helped, along with a professional demeanor and two bits of serendipity in the interview process. Unlike the other person applying for the journal editor job (who later joined West End as a talented editor and creator, and has since gone on to do exceptionally well in other fields), I did not walk into the interview with West End Games' owner to find him holding a stylish women's shoe in his hand, and was thus not initially shocked by this odd sight. I also, by sheer coincidence, answered the owner's question about how the Galactic Empire governed its territory by making a comparison with Imperial Rome, without really knowing that one of the owner's favorite wargames at the time was Imperium Romanum II....

*D6 Magazine:* I noticed you operate Griffon Publishing where you continue to develop games. As the phenomena of gaming gains momentum, do you see yourself getting back into developing role-playing games on a larger scale?

*Peter:* I would love to return to designing roleplaying games as well as board and wargames for a larger audience. While developments in gaming make this more possible -- specifically the increased interest in certain game types and the lower publishing threshold allowed by technology and internet sales sites like DriveThruRPG.com -- right now I don't have much time or focus given my full-time responsibilities as a stay at home dad. I always have a few projects in development on track toward publication, but given my constraints, I don't establish any rigid schedules.

“Some of my favorite memories come from the charity games I’ve run at conventions...”

*D6 Magazine:* What role-playing games systems have you played over the years? Do you have any game systems you continue to play regularly? You must have many wonderful memories with role-playing games, having worked with them professionally.

*Peter:* I've played a host of roleplaying games over the years, from quick one-shots to entire campaigns. Obviously West End's Star Wars Roleplaying Game tops the list, but others include Basic and Expert, and Advanced D&D, Traveler, Space 1889, Cyberpunk, Risus, Top Secret, James Bond 007, the Coda Star Trek RPG, Paranoia, Indiana Jones. I've dabbled in the d20 System and 3rd edition D&D, and I've run various genres using the D6 System.

My current schedule doesn't allow for regular play these days; however, I manage to find time once a month to volunteer at the local public library's teen gaming event where I teach and host several board games, including Forbidden Island, Pirateer, and Hey, That's My Fish! Right now I'm still looking for a roleplaying game group among disparate gamers in my rural, some might say "medieval", geographical area; if I do get a group going, I'm most likely to test out a new roleplaying game system I'm developing, though I'm amenable to trying any system that leans more toward rules light than crunch. D6 remains my default "go-to" game system in a pinch.

I'm thankful that my professional involvement with roleplaying games -- both as a full-time editor and a freelancer -- has given me many interesting experiences. It's hard for me to sift through them all and find a few that stand out above the rest....

Some of my favorite memories come from the charity games I've run at conventions. Attendees could bid on a seat in a game scenario with of a Star Wars writer guest roleplaying a character from one of their novels. Fans always seemed humbly amazed to not only get to meet their favorite Star Wars authors but to sit down at the table and enjoy a roleplaying game with them. The wit and intrigue flying across the table was often enough to garner a small audience, and everyone was a solid roleplayer and a good sport.

I also enjoyed giving dedicated fan authors the encouragement and opportunity to bring their stories and game materials to publication for their favorite licensed properties and games. Even today, I sometimes sift through my old files and find a letter from a prospective writer -- what I'd call an "up-and-coming author" -- who thanked me for taking the time to write them an extensive rejection letter with guidance on improving their writing instead of simply sending them an impersonal form rejection letter.

Taking that time is an important part of cultivating good writers, especially when they could graduate from writing Journal articles to contributing to or authoring entire sourcebooks later.

*D6 Magazine:* Your experience in game development is impressive. Since the release of the OpenD6 OGL, have you considered developing new material using D6 or any of the D6 variants under Griffin Publishing? I am certain it would get some attention.

*Peter:* I've not considered developing or releasing new material under the OpenD6 OGL. Before Eric Gibson decided to go that route I gave serious thought to using the D6 System under license from him for *Pulp Egypt*, and in fact began writing that setting supplement with D6 System material imbedded in it -- but after a great deal of thought, I decided to develop my own system-neutral Any-System Key to allow gamers to use my setting materials with whatever game system they preferred, including D6. It's easy enough to drop stats in that I frequently do it for convention games right before the session begins. At this point, aside from a few rare projects using my own original game mechanics, I prefer to develop setting materials for the Any-System Key to use across a broad spectrum of game systems rather than limiting it to the D6 System, even though that's my personal favorite game engine.

## “D6 remains an easy system to introduce roleplaying to new players.”

*D6 Magazine:* In your background with Creative Writing and editing, what do feel are the most important approaches you use in game development?

*Peter:* I'm going to answer this focusing on setting and adventure development, since “game development” for me means “game system development,” a somewhat different yet linked element of writing for roleplaying games. The basic literary elements -- introduction, plot developments and escalation, climax, and denouement, all affected by protagonists, adversaries, and setting -- still form a solid bases for scenario creation. A good adventure merges these, though not in the same format as a published story, film, or graphic novel. Wherever one

stands on the linear versus non-linear adventure debate, what some refer to as “railroading versus sandbox” styles of play, the fact remains that a scenario still employs literary forms whether the plot emerges in the writing of the adventure or its development through actual play.

As a writer, I focus on putting information about a scenario on paper, so to speak, to help other gamemasters run a similar experience for their players based on my settings and adversaries. I've played around with my adventure-writing format to range from very linear plots to more freeform; open-ended scenarios where locations characters freely explore help uncover and escalate the plot. I'm still varying my adventure-writing style as part of my personal growth as a writer and game designer. Though I love a fully developed scenario with notes, sidebars, and detailed location and plot elements, I'm challenging myself to create adventure concepts with a more freeform play style and shorter format, much like the annual One Page Dungeon contest, though I rarely manage to fit my map and location/scenario descriptions on one page.

As an editor, I have certain expectations of game material shared through the printed and digital forms: proper grammar, style, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling; consistent use of italics and other formatting; readable layout. These aren't as much a concern for the average gamemaster running published scenarios or creating their own run from their original notes and maps; but the moment one seeks to share those with a broader audience through various free and for-pay print venues, [such as] blogs, websites, [and] PDFs, I expect them to adhere to basic style and grammar conventions...and at least be consistent in those they choose.

*D6 Magazine:* You mentioned that D6 is your “go-to” game system. What aspects of d6 gaming attract you to it, aside from comfort?

*Peter:* D6 remains an easy system to introduce roleplaying to new players. I've believed this since the release of the first edition Star Wars Roleplaying Game. Take a setting concept everyone knows and, with the D6 System, anyone can teach new players in about 20 minutes. I've done it at countless convention games with Star Wars fans (and a few authors) who've never tried roleplaying games before (or who played D&D once in high school); with pre-generated characters I have them diving into the action in 15 minutes. It even works in iconic settings like medieval fantasy or pulp.

What could be simpler? Roll the dice for the relevant die code and beat a difficulty number or an opposed roll. All of the D6 System rules evolve from this one core mechanic.



The additional nuances like Force/hero points, character points, and wounds work off that basic principle and don't add vast levels of complexity to game play.

This leads to another reason I like the D6 System for my own gaming: ease of preparation. As a gamemaster, I like the simplicity in creating stats for adversaries at a moment's notice based on that core mechanic and the basic scale of skill die codes (2D average, 4D professional, 6D+ challenging skill die code level). I can easily pull together stats for allies and adversaries, spending more time focusing on story and setting elements rather than game crunch.

I also think the six-sided die remains the most accessible die for new gamers to obtain and use. However integral the range of polyhedral dice is to the basic roleplaying game experience, often related to Dungeons & Dragons, I still believe in using the D6 for games, especially for introductory roleplaying games, since that's the die type most players have sitting around the house in board game boxes.

“As a business,  
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*D6 Magazine:* Wizards of the Coast announced D&D 5th Edition, branding it as: “Like a player makes a character, a DM makes the system.” Do you think that adding versatility into the game mechanics of a game system by design, something that the D6 system already clearly possesses, is going to make a difference for Dungeons & Dragons now?

*Peter:* Dungeons & Dragons is on its own course, whether or not it takes the “game toolkit” approach like the D6 System. For fans, it's already become fractured, and I don't think any innovation or particular approach will reunite the disparate groups of players and their wide-ranging editions

[or] versions of the game. Soliciting input from fans and making a customizable game system might work to some extent for Wizards of the Coast and the D&D brand. I think the strategy of soliciting player input may placate some dissatisfied with where D&D 4th edition has gone. Making the game a collection of customizable system options is interesting, but isn't really a core D&D element. As you mentioned, player's options are just that, optional rules for an individual game, much like house rules.

I personally think D&D served as the lingua franca of the gaming hobby from Basic and Expert and 1st edition even through 3rd edition; having a core rule set helped gamers from varied backgrounds find common ground when gathering to play, especially for newcomers exploring the hobby or players at conventions or through official play venues like the old RPGA. D&D then was like a common computer operating system allowing gamers to engage in a roleplaying game experience using a core system instead of having to learn new house rules or grasp a different set of core mechanics.

The pivotal point in D&D's development was the 3rd edition choice to release the d20 system under the OGL, enabling other publishers, and eventually Paizo Publishing, to develop similar game play alternatives like Pathfinder that retained a significant portion of the gamer base after D&D 4th edition released with significant changes that alienated many players. The subsequent rise of the old school renaissance and retro-clone movements didn't help the D&D brand; much of this came about thanks to the new internet technologies enabling what might previously have been considered “fan” publishers to release their works for free or fee to wider audiences online.

All these factors and I'm sure many others have brought the D&D brand to this point. As a business, Wizards of the Coast must do something to try winning back player-consumers who have turned elsewhere, [such as] Pathfinder, old school renaissance games, older, unsupported editions of D&D for their roleplaying game hobby activities. All these efforts, and the individual efforts of parent gamers drawing their children into gaming, will help maintain and grow future interest in the gaming hobby; but I'm afraid the days when D&D is the undisputed flagship for the hobby are waning.

*D6 Magazine:* It does appear that the tide is shifting away from D&D. Was your passion in gaming sparked early on before working with West End Games, or later as a part of your career?

*Peter:* Certainly, Dungeons & Dragons introduced me to roleplaying games and sparked my early enthusiasm for

gaming. In high school, it inspired me to create my own setting elements and scenarios, and drove me to create other games, including fragmentary roleplaying games for other genres and a host of amateurish yet enjoyable board and card games. It kindled a greater interest in fantasy and science fiction literature. And Dragon Magazine certainly inspired me to “publish” my own roleplaying game fanzine in my high school years. Overall D&D gave my creative energies focus that, at the time, I suppose steered me toward a career in writing, editing, and publishing. And while I certainly wanted to design roleplaying game materials professional from that time onward, I had no idea I’d have that opportunity, nor the chance to work full-time or freelance in the hobby games industry. West End’s release of the Star Wars Roleplaying Game rekindled my love for gaming while in college, stoked my fan enthusiasm for the original trilogy, and inspired me to pursue at the very least freelance writing for the game industry.

“Time has proven roleplaying games as an entertainment genre aren’t just a passing fad...”

*D6 Magazine:* Given the breadth of your experience, if a person wanted to start making games professionally, what advice would you offer them in terms of finding a team and creating new products?

*Peter:* I’d encourage people to pursue game publishing as a hobby enterprise first, even if creating products for sale, simply because the business and financial aspects of working professionally as a game designer continue to offer minimal rewards. Nonetheless, whether pursuing tabletop roleplaying game design as a hobby or career, I have a few recommendations, most of which center around becoming a “Renaissance Man” (and I don’t use this term to mean women can’t do this...it’s just an expression, and I’d place emphasis on the “Renaissance” portion of it, not the “Man”). Learn all aspects of the trade: game design, writing, editing, layout, some basic map and art skills, internet fluency (both basic website design and social networking, which many folks already have these days), marketing and promotion. Even if you’re doing this

as a hobby for fun, maintain a professional demeanor and work ethic, especially when dealing with other people. Remain positive and consistent.

*D6 Magazine:* Would you mind speculating a little on where you think the future of the table top role-playing game industry is leading us?

*Peter:* Tabletop roleplaying games will never come close to rivaling, let alone eclipsing, digital gaming in whatever form it takes in the near future. I fear it will only remain a creative hobby among a growing but small population of geeks seeking a different kind of game experience than that offered by digital gaming options. It might gain new followers as parents pass their love for the hobby to their kids and gamers recruit a few handfuls of their friends, though this in no way represents any great degree of growth needed to make the hobby more mainstream. Time has proven roleplaying games as an entertainment genre aren’t just a passing fad, but they’ll never rise to such predominance as other more conveniently passive forms of entertainment.

This is all pure speculation heavily influenced by trends in the current roleplaying game market; but I secretly hope the hobby finds a more widespread, mainstream audience as both a means of entertainment but also education. General gaming has slowly gained attention with the public consciousness thanks to a number of factors: the popularity of high-end “European” style board games among average non-gamers; the academic efforts like those of Scott Nicholson and Bernie DeKoven to encourage our society to examine how games and play affect our lives; the trend in public libraries to offer more gaming programs, both analog and digital; the continued presence and hopefully growth of small, regional gaming conventions; and the resilience of the quality Friendly Local Gaming Stores (FLGS) with knowledgeable, personable staff, solid inventory, and hospitable play areas.

*D6 Magazine:* As a parent of three and gamer, I am an advocate of the gamification of academia and education. How would you see applying D6 game development towards educating children working out, given that D6 gaming is so much easier than many other systems?

*Peter:* I’m also an advocate in both using games in education and to foster a sense of fun about learning (and a sense of fun for fun’s sake). I don’t really see d6 gaming having any particular advantage over other roleplaying game systems in the “gamification” of academia and education (taking into account that “gamification” has various interpretations); sure, it’s somewhat more accessible as a rules set, but overall roleplaying games

have the same effects in education as they've always had. I feel roleplaying games, along with board, card, and wargames, and most other recreational activities have an inherent value in educating children, to whatever varying degree parents or other educators infuse them. They can help with socialization, math and language skills, managing expectations and realities, sportsmanship, creativity, and problem solving and can be adapted for a variety of beneficial purposes in numerous settings. The D6 System might seem more accessible, and thus seem like a better fit for introducing roleplaying games to kids; but children pick things up awfully quickly, so I feel some degree of complexity is beneficial. Overall, I think roleplaying games, as well as all kinds of games, have their place in educating our children and, in fact, helping people of all ages, even stodgy, middle-aged adults like myself, in broadening their horizons and experience.

*D6 Magazine:* You mentioned the “Renaissance Man” skill set, and it got me thinking: what do you see as your biggest challenges in the development of games?

*Peter:* I’m primarily a settings and scenarios guy. Whether I’m designing something for my own benefit or freelancing for someone else, I still need to understand the rules in the context of creating useable source material and adventures, but overall I find designing my own rules quite daunting. I’ve pushed myself to dabble more in practical game design lately, from roleplaying game projects to different board and card game concepts. That’s part of the “Renaissance Man” idea, not simply gaining a certain skill set and sitting back on one’s laurels using those, but trying to expand one’s knowledge and experience to further incorporate into future endeavors.

Two other areas about which I don’t feel terribly comfortable are layout and artwork. I have a good working knowledge of layout principles and techniques from my time working at the newspaper, with actual paste-up, no less, and at West End Games, where production manager Richard Hawran helped me establish the graphic look of *The Official Star Wars Adventure Journal* and guided me, and listened to me, in developing the look of other products. Graphic design is one area I’m always seeking to improve. I’m also weak in my artistic abilities, both in talent and motivation. Doodling human or animal figures remains challenging, though I’m okay with architecture and landscape. I suppose I have adequate abilities rendering maps of certain basic styles; though even in drafting simple maps I often drag my feet knowing it’s going to take time and a lot more effort than my writing tasks. You’ll notice my most recent projects, *Heroes of Rura-Tonga* and *Pulp Egypt*, rely on historical images from the Library of Congress and other public sources with no

known reproduction restrictions; this is great for source material with some kind of historical setting, but not so useful for illustrating more original materials.

*D6 Magazine:* When you make games, even today with Griffin Publishing Studio, do you find that personal stories from your life emerge in your creations and writing?

*Peter:* Like most authors I sometimes draw from personal experience when creating locations, characters, and situations. It’s rarely obvious, but bits find their way into elements here and there. I don’t always make a conscious effort to do it; it simply happens, particularly when it develops into a very good idea. For instance, a few inhabitants of Rura-Tonga Town in *Heroes of Rura-Tonga* have their basis in real life people I know, but I’ve taken core elements from reality and embellished or twisted them to develop more interesting game setting characters. Some setting concepts come from personal experiences, though they usually form inspiration for further development than simply translate straight into a setting. Two locations I’m developing for the Infinite Cathedral fantasy setting honor beloved pets that have passed on, though the individuals served more as inspiration (“How can I incorporate setting elements featuring cats and rabbits?”) than actual characters in the setting.

*D6 Magazine:* When looking back, what is your fondest memory in working in the gaming industry, whether with West End Games, or otherwise?

“...an active online D6 community can continue to maintain and grow interest in the D6 System...”

*Peter:* I’m not exactly certain which GenCon this happened -- maybe 1996 or 1997, back when GenCon was still in Milwaukee -- but at the time I’d recently received a generous freelance payment for stepping in to help bail out a major Star Wars Roleplaying Game project. Management actually recruited almost the entire editorial staff to freelance pieces of the project in their off hours against an



extremely tight production deadline. That year I organized and hosted a dinner at the revolving restaurant atop the Milwaukee Hyatt for contributors to *The Official Star Wars Adventure Journal*. It included West End Star Wars staff, established authors as well as “up-and-coming” authors, artists, and a few hangers-on with ties to Star Wars. It was one of those three-hour-long dinners where everyone hangs around meeting and chatting with everyone else in a friendly, relaxed atmosphere. I walked away wishing I could host something like that every year as a reward for the hardworking people who helped make *The Official Star Wars Adventure Journal* possible.

*D6 Magazine:* With all the time you spend running games at conventions and making appearances, I am sure you run into a cornucopia of personalities. Are there ever any ideas or traits you wish all roleplayers just knew ahead of time, before gaming or coming talking with you?

*Peter:* I used to entertain such expectations -- things like “Please don’t tell me about your character, or how your party of Ewok Jedi Knights took out the Death Star,” or “I’m afraid I’m not interested in publishing your game system based on the d12, however cool it might sound,” or “Sorry, I’m not in a position to hire and pay everyone who wants to write and publish games” -- but these days I simply try to accept that everyone meets me with a different set of expectations, objectives, personalities, perspective on rules, and perception of setting... and they’re all interesting and entertaining to me.

It’s an education to meet roleplayers from a variety of different regions and backgrounds. Everyone brings something new to the table, contributing to a completely new game experience each time, even for scenarios I’ve been running for years. I try to find something enjoyable in everyone I meet, even traits that test my patience or verge on the annoying. Those two players trying to get each other’s character into trouble might seem distracting, but they’ll make for some comic if not entirely entertaining moments later. The impatient kid at the table who can’t wait his turn might just walk away from the game so impressed with the roleplaying experience that he invests in it as a hobby instead of a momentary curiosity.

I suppose I expect roleplayers to remain open-minded and positive, to be willing to set aside some of their expectations to try something new and have fun, to enjoy having a different gamemaster and players around for a game session no matter how they interpret the rules or roleplay their character. These are all basics for gamers, though, whether they’re meeting me, some industry luminary, or others in their local gaming group.

*D6 Magazine:* Lastly, I want to express my gratitude to you for giving your time and consideration in answering these questions. Do you have any last ditch advice for D6 gaming community?

*Peter:* In today’s age the internet and social networking continue to play a role in greater world events, with everything from online petitions and political parody videos to protest organization and live video-casts from nations in revolutionary turmoil. They’ve helped raise awareness about and influence government decisions on such vital freedom-of-speech legislation as SOPA and PIPA. In a much less serious vein, technology -- from desktop publishing and computer generated artwork to social networking and the internet -- has enabled gamers to reach out to others in their community and beyond. D6 gamers in particular face an uphill battle, as new or more aggressively marketed game engines continue vying for gamers’ attention (and dollars) and threaten the continued perception of D6 as a viable, supported system in the gaming public’s consciousness.

Look at the resurgence of “old school renaissance” games, a cultural movement within gaming fueled almost entirely by online and self-publishing efforts. If such a strategy can tap into gamers’ nostalgic feelings for old rules sets, certainly an active online D6 community can continue to maintain and grow interest in the D6 System. Efforts like *D6 Magazine*, AntiPaladin Games’ Mini Six system, Wicked North Games’ *Azamar*, and others do a great job producing D6 material and maintaining a strong online presence; but D6 needs more to remain a visible force in the gaming scene as it evolves through the 21st century.

#### **Editorial Note:**

You can read more about Peter Scweighofer’s recent works at the Griffon Publishing Studio website at <http://griffonpubstudio.com/>. The site features card and board games as well as roleplaying games.

## Firearms

By Phil Hatfield

Whether you're running a game with pirates, during world wars, or in modern times, chances are you're going to have firearms in it.

These rules give you the ability to have a variety of different firearms that provide all the mechanics you need to account for the advances in firearm technology. They include any special notations for the type, as well as a couple of samples of firearms in that time period.

### Tech 4 - The Middle Ages - The first spark!

When firearms first started being used in combat, they were rather rudimentary. They usually consisted of a short barrel mounted on the end of a stick. They were lit with a match that was held in one hand, while the other held the firearm. They were not accurate beyond a few paces, but they required little in the way of training. They were a good launch point for better weapons to come, however. These weapons required a shot be created for the weapon. This was either a stone, chiseled to form a ball, or a ball of lead. Rudimentary gunpowder was loaded into the barrel of the weapon, followed by the shot. There wasn't much done in the way of compacting the powder, so the range of the weapon was rather short and the punch of the shot was somewhat limited.

There were two advantages to this weapon. The first was that it took little in the way of training to have a person load and fire it. Aiming wasn't a factor, as the shot was propelled haphazardly as it was and there were no sights on the weapon, so any skill with the weapon was acquired, not taught. The second advantage was that it allowed a relatively small projectile to pierce fairly stout armor. This gave a good edge to the gunner when going up against knights or armored infantry.

An additional side benefit of the earliest firearms was the shock effect of them. People and animals were not used to the loud noise and flash of gunpowder from these new devices. Until armies became more aware of the somewhat limited potential of the weapons, they proved to have a slightly deleterious effect on morale. A loud noise, a flash of fire and puff of smoke, and a fellow soldier falls dead near you. It appeared as though it was magic for a short time, causing limited cases of panic in both man and horse. Once they became a bit more prevalent, the fictitious fear of the unknown went away, and people only feared the potential damage the firearms could inflict.

#### • Tech 4 firearm example



One Hand Gonne (match lit)

Age: Tech 4 - Middle Ages

Type: Ballistic

Scale: 0 (Character)

Ammunition: lead ball (size varies)

Capacity: single shot

Rate of Fire: one shot every 8 rounds

Range: 1 / 5 / 20

Damage: 2D+1 Close and Medium / 2D Long

Penetration: 1

### Ancient Firearms

**Loading:** The gunner must roll the Firearms skill (or base attribute if the skill is not known) when reloading the weapon. The number of rounds that it takes to reload the weapon is listed under the weapon's rate of fire. Even though more than one round may be needed, only one Firearms skill check is needed to load it.

#### Difficulty of loading the weapon is Moderate.

If the gunner fails the make the roll, the weapon is "under-loaded" with powder. This doesn't allow the shot to fly properly, so it only does half damage when fired.

If the gunner rolls equal or greater than *Moderate*, the weapon is loaded normally.

If the gunner rolls a 1 on the Wild Die, the weapon is "overloaded" with powder and a possible problem could occur. (see below)

**Firing:** The gunner must roll the Firearms skill (or base attribute if the skill is not known) when firing the weapon. By touching a lit match to the open touch-hole, the powder could be lit, causing the weapon to be fired.

Difficulty to hit with the weapon depends on the range to the target and whether the target is dodging or partially covered.

If the gunner fails the roll, the shot misses the target.

If the gunner rolls a 1 on the Wild Die, one of two things will happen.

If the weapon was loaded normally, a 1 results in a misfire. The misfire discharges harmlessly, causing no damage.

If the weapon was overloaded with powder, a 1 results in catastrophic weapon failure. The barrel explodes, inflicting double damage to the gunner. The weapon is then useless.

**Reduced effectiveness:** Due to the type of powder used, the damage of the bullet from these firearms became less the further it travelled. To reflect this, ancient firearms have two or more damage listings. One will be listed for Close Range (the first number band), and one or more listed for Medium and Long Range. Depending on what range the target is at will depend on the amount of damage rolled for the shot.

Wet weather also caused issues for weapons of this type. Moderate to heavy rain could make firing a weapon completely impossible. A mist, or fog, can cause wetness of the powder or possibly extinguish the burning wick used to light the powder. A gunner usually had to take time to relight his match or wick and then ignite the powder. Sometime, in slightly more wet conditions, it could take a couple of touches with the match in order to ignite the powder and launch the projectile. In slightly damp conditions, any result on the Wild Die of a 1 when firing the weapon means that the match or the powder is too damp. The match must be re-lit if it is not hot enough, or the match needs to be blown on and re-touched to the powder to see if it would ignite, meaning another roll to hit must be applied.

## Tech 5 - Early Modern - New innovations

Soon firearms were developed that were easier to handle, and could actually be used more effectively at longer ranges. With these developments, there were also changes made to the method of firing the weapons. Instead of having an open touch-hole that could get moisture into it, newer methods were created. Also, the match became integrated into the weapon, so a gunner could use both hands to steady the weapon when firing it. Soon the match-lit versions were replaced with wheel-lock and flintlock, which did away with the need of keeping a lit fuse ready for firing.

Gunners also started realizing that tamping the powder allowed the shot to be propelled faster and further. Sites started being built into the weapons due to their range increases and accuracy. The first rifling was seen in some firearms, allowing spin to be applied to the bullet, allowing it to travel straighter and farther. Not many weapons had this improvement, but it was a step forward.

### • Tech 5 firearm example



Spanish Infantry Musket Model 1752 (flintlock)

Age: Tech 5 - Early Modern

Type: Ballistic

Scale: 0 (Character)

Ammunition: .69 inch lead ball

Capacity: single shot

Rate of Fire: 1 shot every 4 rounds

Range: 1-28 / 55 / 110

Damage: 4D+1 - Close and Medium / 3D+1 - Long

Penetration: +2

## Old Firearms

**Loading:** Loading the weapons became a matter of time rather than a test of skill. The amount of powder put into a barrel or touch pan could be measured out ahead of time. This took away the need to make a skill check to load the weapon. A weapon still took a number of rounds to load a single shot, which was listed in the weapon's rate of fire.

**Firing:** Depending on the type of weapon, various different things could happen. All weapons have the difficulty to hit equal to the range or whether the target is dodging or under cover.

**Matchlock** - When rolling to hit, if a 1 is rolled on the Wild Die, the match fails to light the powder in the touch pan sufficiently. Part of the powder burns off but does not fire the shot. The touch pan must be refilled (taking 1 round) and the match fanned in order to fire again.

**Wheel-lock** - When rolling to hit, if a 1 is rolled on the Wild Die, roll the Wild Die again.

A second 1 results in the powder in the pan cooking off but the weapon not firing. The pan must be reloaded (taking 1 round) and the weapon cocked and fired again.

Anything else but a 1 on the second roll means the weapon fired normally.

**Flintlock** - When rolling to hit, if a 1 is rolled on the Wild Die, the powder in the pan has cooked off and the pan must be reloaded (taking 1 round), the weapon cocked, and fired again.

**Reduced effectiveness:** Even though the weapons were becoming better, they still had significant damage reduction the further the bullet travelled. To reflect this, old firearms have two damage listings. Depending on the range of the target will depend on the damage inflicted by the bullet.



## Tech 6 - The Modern Era - Major advancements

As the value and lethality of firearms became recognized, firearms started being improved upon at a more dramatic rate. The old gunpowder that was used for so long was replaced with “smokeless” powder. No longer did firearms leave massive plumes of smoke when they fired, giving away the firer’s position and nearly rendering him blind. To make them even more deadly, there were developments to make them fire faster. First there were percussion caps. Then the bullets and firing caps were encapsulated into a single cartridge. No longer did the gunner have to load the powder separately. These cartridge bullets also allowed for weapons to be loaded with more than one shot. Now a gunner could fire several times before he had to reload the firearm. Lever action and bolt action repeaters came into being. Revolvers emerged, allowing a single person the ability to fire multiple shots in personal defense.

### • Tech 6 firearm example



Spencer Repeater Rifle (1863)

Age: Tech 6 - Modern Era

Type: Ballistic

Scale: 0 (Character)

Ammunition: .52 caliber rimfire

Capacity: 7

Rate of Fire: maximum 2 shots per round - lever action

Range: 1-45 / 185 / 500

Damage: 4D+1

Penetration: +2

Note: This is a black powder round, resulting in a small cloud of smoke with each shot fired.

## Typical Firearms

**Loading:** Some weapons were single shot and still had to be loaded with powder and shot separately. For these weapons, an amount of time is listed for the rate of fire, taking multiple rounds to load the weapon. Other weapons could hold a certain number of cartridge bullets. Once those shots were fired, more cartridges would need to be loaded. Typically a gunner can load four (4) cartridges per round.

For revolvers, one round must be spent removing the spent cartridge casings, and then one or more rounds must be spent loading new cartridges into the weapon. Some revolvers may make the process faster or slower, depending on the design.

**Firing:** Depending on the type of weapon, certain complications can come up while firing. The difficulty to fire the weapon will depend on the range to the target and whether the target is dodging or behind cover.

**Percussion cap** - If a 1 is rolled on the Wild Die when rolling to hit, the cap is a dud and the weapon doesn’t fire. The cap must be removed, a new one put on, the weapon cocked and fired again. This takes 1 round.

**Percussion cap revolver** - If a 1 is rolled on the Wild Die when rolling to hit, the shot is not fired. The weapon must be cocked to fire another chamber in the cylinder. This takes 1 action.

**Black powder cartridge** - If a 1 is rolled on the Wild Die when rolling to hit, the weapon has misfired and only travels half the distance and inflicts half the damage listed if the target is still within range.

**Firing multiple shots:** Revolvers, bolt action rifles and lever action rifles and pistols can all fire more than one shot in a round. Each has different penalties for doing so.

**Revolvers** - There are two types of revolvers; single action and double action.

Single action revolvers only perform a single action with each motion. So cocking the revolve is one action, and pulling the trigger is another action. It is possible for a gunner to fire multiple shots, with each action over the first causing a multiple action penalty (MAP).

Double action revolvers perform the cocking and firing action all at once. This means that each pull of the trigger is considered one action and fires one shot. It is possible for a gunner to fire multiple shots, with each action over the first causing a MAP.

**Lever action, single shot** - Some lever action rifles only held a single cartridge at a time. Once a shot was fired, working the lever usually ejected the spent casing. Then a new cartridge could be placed into the chamber, the lever closed, and the weapon fired again. Opening the lever takes 1 action. Loading a new cartridge takes 1 action, and closing the lever takes another action. It is possible for a gunner to fire multiple shots, with each action over the first causing a MAP.

**Lever action, multiple capacity** - If a firearm holds more than a single cartridge, once a shot is fired the lever may be open to eject the spent casing, then closed to load a new round from the weapon's total capacity. This is much faster, and takes 1 action to both open and close the lever. So if a gunner fired a shot (1 action) he could then work the lever (1 action) to get another round loaded, and fire again (1 action) for a total of 3 actions in a round.

**Bolt action, single shot** - This works the same as the level action for weapon that only hold one cartridge at a time. One action is used to open the bolt, which ejects the spent casing, another action is used to load a new cartridge, and a third action is used to close the bolt. It is possible for a gunner to fire multiple shots, with each action over the first causing a MAP.

**Bolt action, multiple capacity** - As with the lever action, some bolt action rifles could carry more than one cartridge. It takes one action to open the bolt in order to eject the spent casing. Then it takes another action to close the bolt, loading a new cartridge. In order to fire a new shot after the first shot is fired in combat, it takes 1 action to open the bolt, another action to close the bolt, and a third action to fire another shot. It is possible for a gunner to fire multiple shots, with each action over the first causing a MAP.

**Rolling block action, single shot** - This action uses two different cocking actions in order to load a cartridge. One action cocks the firing hammer. Another action opens the hammer to load the round. A third action would be to load the round. A fourth action would be to close the hammer to seal the cartridge in the barrel. Finally, a fifth action would be to fire the weapon. It is possible for a gunner to fire multiple shots, with each action over the first causing a MAP.

## Tech 7 - World Wars - The advent of automatic weapons

When the world went to war in the early 1900s, weapons were advanced even further. The Second World War took even greater leaps in firearms advancement. Automatic weapons became the weapon of choice. Faster firing ability, without having to work bolts or levers, meant people could pump out more bullets even faster. Of course, the more bullets that were fired, the more the weapon jumped around, making it more difficult to hit the intended target. This really brought into focus the effect of recoil on firearms. Up until this time, weapons simply had "kick". The act of reloading the weapon was actually

more disruptive to aiming than the recoil of the weapon. With the ability to fire multiple shots with just the pull of the trigger, weapons suddenly could send several bullets down range and the recoil of the weapon started having an effect. The more shots that were fired, the more difficult the weapon became to aim accurately.

## Modern Firearms

**Loading:** Many weapons during the world wars started using magazines or some other form of "bulk" loading of cartridges. There are several types of loading mechanisms used with modern firearms.

**Stripper clips** - These clips usually carry several cartridges

### • Tech 7 firearm example



M1 Garand

Age: Tech 7 - World Wars

Type: Ballistic

Scale: 0 (Character)

Ammunition: .30-06

Capacity: 8 round internal magazine

Rate of Fire: 1

Recoil: 3

Range: 1-180 / 390 / 656

Damage: 6D+2

Penetration: 1D

Note: uses an 8 round en-bloc clip to load all rounds at once. This is not like a stripper clip and when the en-bloc is empty, it ejects by popping out with a loud clang sound.

on them. They are placed in the weapon's breach and pushed (or "stripped") from the clip into the weapon. This takes 1 action to place the clip, 1 to strip it, and 1 more to chamber a cartridge.

**En Bloc** - These are clips which are loaded as a whole unit into the weapon. The individual bullets are automatically pulled from the clip as the weapon fires. This takes 1 action to place the en bloc and push it in, and 1 action to chamber a cartridge.

**Magazine** - These are a collection of cartridges, held in a mostly contained magazine container, that are usually

loaded with a single action. Some bulky magazines may take more than one action to load into the weapon. Typically the act of removing or ejecting an empty magazine is a free action. Putting another magazine into the weapon and chambering a new cartridge takes 1 action.

**Belt fed** - Some automatic weapons take a belt of cartridges. The belt is typically fed into the side of the firearm and spent casings and the empty belt is ejected out the other side of the firearm. Reloading a belt fed weapon takes 1 full round to accomplish.

**Firing:** Any weapon that is capable of firing at least one bullet with each pull of the trigger, will now have recoil to take into account. The first shot fired every round will not be affected by recoil, but any additional shots fired in the same round by the same weapon would be. For each shot greater than the first, add the recoil of the weapon to the difficulty to hit the target. Some weapons may have a "burst" or "automatic" recoil value as well as a single shot recoil value. If a burst of several bullets is fired, or if the gunner fires an extended amount of fully automatic weapons fire, add in the recoil value appropriately.

Example: A weapon is listed as having a recoil of 2. The gunner decides to shoot 3 shots in one round. Three shots take 3 actions, so the gunner will suffer -2D to his rolls. In addition, the recoil values make it more difficult to hit. For the second and third shot, the recoil value of +2 is added. So if the difficulty to hit the target was 12, the first shot would still be at a 12, but the second shot would be a difficulty of 14, and the third would be a difficulty of 16. The gunner would roll the Firearms skill -2D (for multiple action penalties) and must get equal to or greater than 12, 14, and 16 for the shots in order to hit the target.

Any 1 rolled on the Wild Die is simply used as a reducer. Take away the Wild Die and also one other die of the highest amount rolled. Some weapons, such as a belt fed weapon, might have special modifiers that require an additional Wild Die roll if a 1 is originally rolled. If the Wild Die is rolled as 1 again, the belt fed weapon will jam and need to be cleared. Any other result is treated as a reducer.

## Tech 8 - Contemporary Era - The time of refinement

Firearm technology has largely remained unchanged since the last technological growth. There are still automatic weapons, smokeless powder is still being used, and recoil is still a factor. Pretty much all types of weapons listed

above are used in the contemporary era. No particle changes are made for this time period. The only moderate change, though not in wide use, was the introduction of caseless ammunition. This type of cartridge basically dissolves, is burnt up, or is fired along with the bullet, so no spent shell casing is ever ejected from the firearm. This has no obvious effect on the way the weapon handles and could only come up in role playing situations where reloading spent shell casings is a necessity, such as during post-apocalyptic settings where ammunition is no longer mass produced.

All firearms will fall into one of the categories above, and the rules for the appropriate type should be used.

## Armor Penetration

Bullets, from the moment they were first fired, started an arms race against armor smiths. At first, weapons had to be hardened and sharpened in order to penetrate through armor. Later, bullets had such velocity that they could penetrate armor by sheer force. As the gunpowder

### • Tech 8 firearm example



M-16A2 Assault Rifle

Age: Tech 8 - Contemporary Era

Type: Ballistic

Scale: 0 (Character)

Ammunition: 5.56 x 45mm NATO

Capacity: 30 round box

Rate of Fire: single fire or 3 round burst

Recoil: 2 single fire/ 4 burst

Range: 1-130 / 525 / 800

Damage: 5D+1

became more refined, and the bullets themselves took on a more ballistic shape, the armor penetration of the weapons increased.

All firearms will have a Penetration rating listed. This rating is for the standard type of ammunition that is used by the weapon. Certain special types of ammunition can be purchased for weapons in Techs 7 and 8 which allow even greater armor penetration.

The Penetration value is the amount the armor rating of the target is reduced by. Therefore if the Penetration of



the weapon is listed as +1, the armor rating of the target is reduced by 1 pip. A Penetration of +2 reduces the armor rating by 2 pips. A Penetration rating of 1D will reduce the target's armor value by 1D. Penetration only works to reduce armor values. If the target is not wearing armor, the penetration rating has no effect.

## Special effects of Ballistic weapons

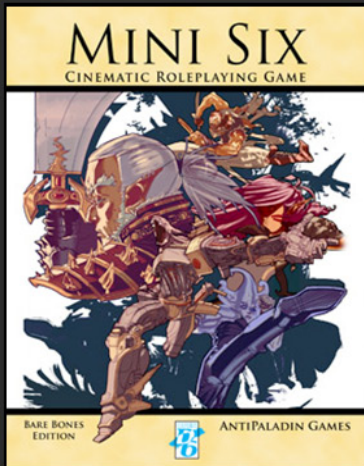
All firearms are under the damage category of Ballistic. This is a Physical type of damage if you are working with futuristic armor that has differing values for Physical and Energy damage types.

Certain armors are better or worse at protecting the wearer from being injured by bullets. Depending on the technology level of the armor, the firearm's penetration may have a greater effect.

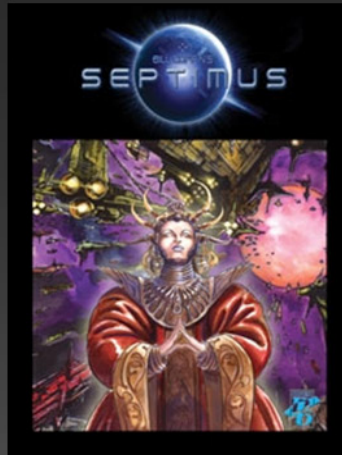
**Ballistic weapon vs. Ancient armor (*Tech 1 through 5*) =**  
Benefit of the armor divided by 2. If the Ancient armor has a triple listing of resistance types, use Piercing protection. After dividing by 2, reduce the armor by the Penetration value of the bullet.

**Ballistic weapon vs. Modern armor (*Tech 6 through 8*) =**  
= Subtract Penetration from armor as normal. No other changes necessary.

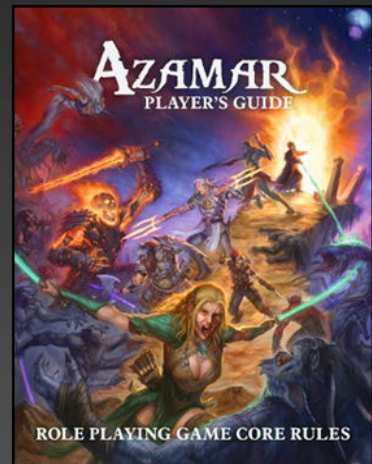
**Ballistic weapon vs. Future armor (*Tech 9 and 10*) =**  
Double the armor rating, then reduce it by the Penetration value.



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## “Doc-Woc” and the Angel

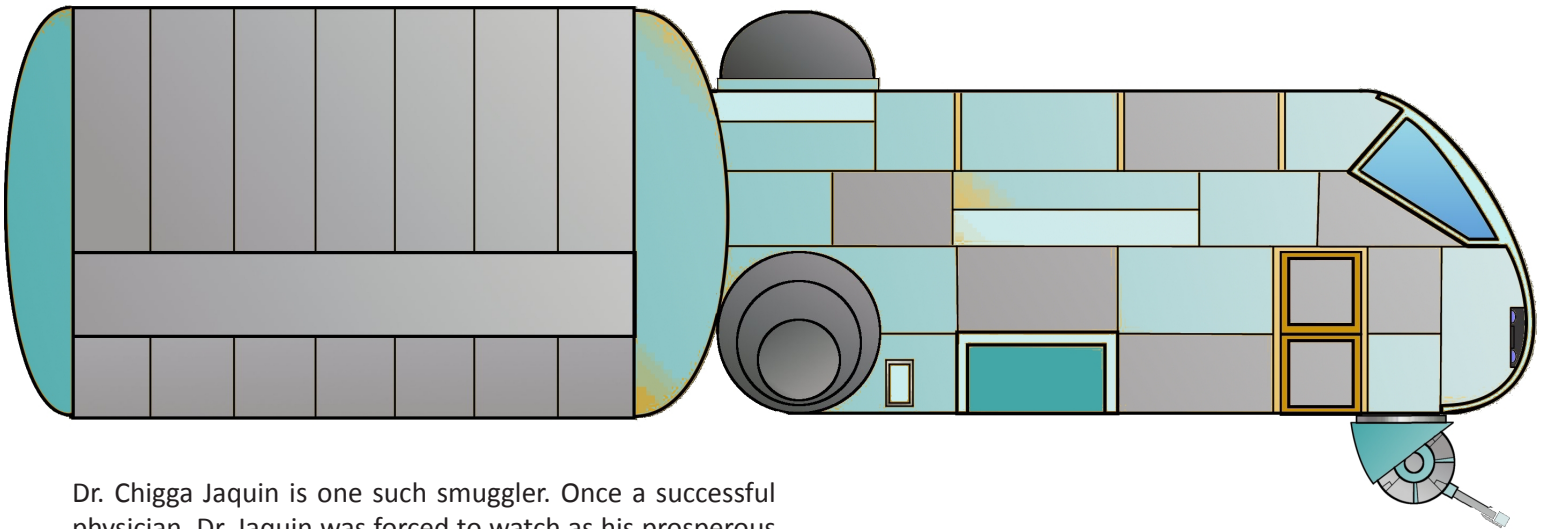
by Ray McVay

This spacecraft is a customized version of the Starwell- Interstellar Tanker. The stock version of this ship, as well as full deck plans, are available a [RPGNow.com](http://RPGNow.com)

One of the more notorious forms of smuggling in the galaxy is drug trafficking. Next to slaving, no field of illicit commerce is as reviled as supply of harmful pharmaceuticals to the ne’er-do-wells across the planets. But not all who practice this trade are villains. As the forces of tyranny continue to oppress sentients throughout the stars, there are many who choose to smuggle not deadly drugs to fuel the underworld, but medicine.

PCs are a member of a rebel group, then Doc-Woc can, of course, be a supplier vital to the war effort. If one or more of the PCs grew up in a refugee camp, or spent time in one, then perhaps Doc-Woc helped them more directly in the past. Alternately, Doc’s trusted position as an independent means that in the event of his capture, rebel groups would most likely mount a rescue operation.

If the PCs are smugglers themselves, a character like Doc-Woc can provide an example of a fringer that still does their part to help save the galaxy. Starting PCs can be shown the ropes by Doc-Woc, who has learned quite a few tricks and has many contacts in the galactic underworld.



Dr. Chigga Jaquin is one such smuggler. Once a successful physician, Dr. Jaquin was forced to watch as his prosperous home world was ground down under the heel of Imperial brutality. Never one to take up arms, Jaquin instead worked as a surgeon in one of the many refugee camps that had come into being.

Even such horrid places were not exempt from the empire’s cruelty; when the camp’s warden ordered a mass-execution in response to the rumors of insurgent recruitment, Dr. Jaquin quietly left his world and vowed to alleviate the suffering he had seen, any way he could.

For the last three years “Doc-Woc” has smuggled pharmaceuticals to refugee camps and insurgent units throughout the sector in a modified Starwell Tanker. He has numerous contacts among rebel groups. Despite not being formally affiliated with any of any of them, he is generally trusted and can depend on them for help just as they depend on him for medical supplies.

GMs can use Doc-Woc and the Angel in a variety of ways. If

### •Dr. Chigga “Doc-Woc” Jaquin

All stats 2D except: Blaster 2D+2, Dodge 3D

Medicine 5D, Streetwise 3D+2

Starship Operation 3D+1, Starship Gunnery 2D+1

Stamina 2D+2

Character Points: 15

Move: 10

Equipment: Starwell Tanker (Angel), Blaster (3D), datapad, comlink, first-aid kit, 2,000 credits

### Angel

Craft: Universal Transports CL-3 Starwell

Type: Light tanker craft



Scale: Starfighter

Length: 22.5 meters

Skill: Space Transports; Starwell Tanker

Crew: 1

Passengers: up to 4

Cargo Capacity: 700 metric tons (liquid; 75 tons in  
hidden compartments; up to 18 tons other)

Consumables: 3 months

FTL Multiplier: x1

FTL Backup: x2

Astrogation Computer: yes

Maneuverability: 0D

Space: 4

Atmosphere: 480;800 kph

Hull: 4D

Shields: 1D

Sensors:

Passive: 10/0D

Scan: 25/1D

Search: 40/2D

Focus: 2/3D

Weapons:

Laser cannon

Fire Arc: turret

Crew: 1

Skill: Starship Gunnery

Fire Control: 2D

Space Range: 1-3/12/25

Atmospheric Range: 100-300 m/1.2 km/2.5km

Damage: 4D

**Foreword:** This will be an ongoing series of articles, written to give people an idea of how D6 can be used to run various types of games. Each article will focus on one aspect, one genre, and provide hints or suggestions on how to integrate them into your games so you can have a variety of genres to run games in using OpenD6.

## Pulp Adventure

by Phil Hatfield

Back in the early 1900s a series of stories came out that were published on simple, inexpensive booklets that used very dingy, pulpy pages in order to keep costs low. The stories on these pages, though, brought forth vivid images of heroes and heroines, places of wild action or strange alien landscapes. Those old “dime” novels are gone, but the idea of pulp adventure still continues today.

Nowadays the idea of pulp adventure harkens back to the heady days of adventuring. Bold, handsome heroes, beautiful damsels in distress, rowdy knuckle-dusting fist fights, and exciting car chases and shoot outs are all part of what make adventures “pulpy” now. No longer is it the pages that are pulp, it’s the action and excitement that is raw and pulpy. Lines are clearly drawn in pulp adventures. The good guys are always good, the villains are all evil, and the innocents are always stuck in between.

The concept of such games is always larger than life. Strange happenings, spooky creatures, or exotic technology all have a play in pulp style adventures. Some examples of the pulp feel include such well known properties as Flash Gordon, King Kong, Indiana Jones, and Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow. In all of those movies you have bold adventuring, larger than life events, and exciting moments that have you sitting on the edge of your seat. You can easily identify who the hero or heroine is in each and the villain is pretty evident.

So how does the OpenD6 handle games such as this? Can it, even?

I say YES, it can!

The idea of pulp is simplicity of form. Characters are easy to identify and a hero can do a little bit of everything. The OpenD6 system easily allows this style to be duplicated on the game table. By utilizing 4 to 6 attributes, and allocating only a few broad skills to each, you can easily replicate the very pulpy, over the top action hero nature of this genre. Simplicity of skills keeps with the overall feel of the genre, and allows characters to do a variety of things

with only limited knowledge. This leads to bold actions, daring attempts at heroism and bravery, and dangerous but exciting chases and gunfights!

Some examples of attributes that really capture the flavor of pulp adventure include: *Strength* or “**Brawn**”, *Intelligence* or “**Smarts**”, *Charisma* or “**Looks**”, *Dexterity* or “**Prowess**”, *Constitution* or “**Toughness**”, *Aptitude* or “**Talent**”. All of those, with either name, or only some of those, could certainly cover all aspects of a character and give each a distinct feel necessary for pulp adventure.

Once you have how many and which types of attributes you want to use, you need to pick skills that adequately reflect a pulp style of adventure. For these you want the skills to be broad in effect, so that it doesn’t require a lot of specific, narrow skills but can allow a person to do many things with just a few skills. Some examples of skills that can be used in a pulp style adventure:

**Weapons** - from shooting weapons to swords and knives

**Fighting** - for when you get into fist fights or other brawls

**Driving** - cars, motorcycles, boats, even airplanes and rocket ships

**Fixing** - this is for fixing things, all sorts of things, from vehicles to gadgets

**Sneaking** - for those wanting to break into places, or hide from people, or pick a pocket

**Inventing** - this is for people wanting to invent new things, from simple things to complex items

**Hunting** - this is getting food the natural way, including fishing, trapping, using a weapon or even scrounging food in the wild

**Carousing** - getting to know people, attracting members of the opposite sex, getting information from someone in a good natured way, establishing contacts, even speaking in public

**Building** - this can be for constructing things like houses, or building things from plans with a bunch of materials, or it could be creating barricades or natural fortifications. Also includes taking those things down

**Sports** - running, jumping, dodging, tackling, tumbling, endurance, climbing, all sorts of athletics

**Subterfuge** - this is for tricking people, either by con or by disguise, or by acting

**Authority** - this is what's needed to command others, to be diplomatic, to give instructions or for dealing with any of the rules of law

**Know-How** - the act of using things or figuring things out, both technological and mechanical. Also works for figuring out languages and reading things in publications

**Ranching** - riding animals, caring for animals, identifying animals, and generally being able to know your way around animals to either ride or use for work or for food. Includes roping and breaking

These are just the basics, but they give you a good idea of the broad reach that each skill needs to encompass to full capture the feeling of pulp adventures. By having few, but broader skills, you can have characters that can really capture the feeling of being able to do a lot with the skills that they have. A game master doesn't have to worry about a lot of specific skills and can keep the game running smoothly with quick rolls of a few skills. This really promotes greater amounts of dice in the few skills, which opens the door for the players to perform much more heroic actions that are the hallmark of pulp adventures.

The remaining mechanics of the OpenD6 system naturally promote the quick nature and cinematic feel for pulp adventuring. Pick a difficulty number and roll to beat it really is the simplest, basic principle of D6 and that is why it excels at this style of genre. You can vary the amount of grittiness in your pulp adventure by using either Wound levels for a more generic level or Body Points for a grittier, calculating level of injuries. Wound levels will better reflect the nature of pulp adventure, and if you want the heroes to be particularly stellar in their durability, then increase the number of wound levels. Some examples could be:

**Stunned** - 0 to 3 above = -1D to next action

**Staggered** - 4 to 6 above = -1D to next round

**Badly Bruised** - 7 to 10 above = -1D to skills

**Hurt** - 11 to 14 above = -2D to skills

**Bloodied** - 15 to 18 above = -3D to skills

**Knocked Down** - 19 to 21 above = knocked down, -4D for 1D rounds, -3D to all actions after

**One Foot in the Grave** - 22 to 25 above = knocked down, knocked out for 1D rounds, -4D to all actions after. Any injury of any type again will knock the character out for 1D hours and cause them to be bed-ridden for 2D days to recover

**Pushing up Daisies** - 26 or more = dead

This is just to give you some examples of wound levels that could be used and the names for them that could really capture the feel of a pulp type of adventure. By having more wound levels and increasing the numbers needed to get to the next level, it allows for characters to perform more daring actions and take risks. These risks can lead to daredevil attempts which can really add to the melodramatic nature of this genre.

Finally you need to take into account the setting. When you have villains in a pulp style of adventure, they need to be portrayed as a villain through and through. There isn't a "grey" type of villain in pulp adventures. Heroes are heroic, villains are vile. The bad guy should have plans for big, bold moves that grant them massive power or control over something. Society, a nation, a country, a continent, even the whole world could hang in the balance when it comes to the evil villain's diabolical plot. The henchmen should be plentiful and of a nature where they can get dispatched by the heroes, unless they appear in great number. Even the heroes have to know when they are outnumbered! But there should always be an evident way for the heroes to go about stopping the evil plan from coming to fruition. The villain could either live to fight another day and becoming a recurring villain, or you can move on to the next "villain of the hour" for the next bad guy. Either way, it's the boldness of the stories, the epic nature of the adventure, and the presence of the characters that all contribute to creating the feel of a pulp adventure.

All of these things, combined with the simplicity of the OpenD6 system, can allow for games to be run in a pulp adventure type of genre. You can have games of adventurers gallivanting through the jungles of Africa, or fighting Nazis in World War Two. Evil scientists creating armies of robots or tyrants from other worlds attempting to enforce their will upon the planet go perfectly in pulp adventure. There's even desperados ransacking a frontier town or daring explorations to strange, exotic new places, such as deep under the ocean or deep inside the planet, or even on another planet! All of them can be replicated very easily if you remember to keep the attributes and skills simple and limited in number. The OpenD6 system can handle the rest of the cinematic nature, with its easy dice resolution system and the multitude of creatures and characters that you can use in your games. You just need to provide the adventure!





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# Rethinking The Wild Die

by Michael Fraley

The Wild Die. It's both the bane and boon of many a D6 player. Most D6 gamemasters, too, have sordid tales of the Wild Die ruining or enhancing the play at their tables. A player declares an action, there is the sound of shaken dice, the patter of plastic hitting the table, and then there is a pause. The player announces the total, then sheepishly adds, "... and a one on the Wild Die". Then the player waits to see what fate the gamemaster has in store. Now, most D6 players and GMs say that the Wild Die is what makes the game interesting. Certainly an exploding six allows the characters to perform amazing feats, but players often tell the tales of what happened after they rolled a one. Interestingly enough when players who are less fond of the system list their grievances against OpenD6, one of the top concerns is the Wild Die. Though usually this grievance is phrased in terms of not liking a system where there is a one in six chance of a critical failure. Generally at this point the discussion devolves into arguments from long-time D6 proponents pointing out that this is not the way it works to those that have long ago abandoned the system due, at least in part, to the Wild Die mechanic.

The question then becomes: is the one on the Wild Die a problem for D6? The answer largely depends on how you play the system. With all of the D6 variants now available there is no singular way to play the one on the Wild Die. It is no longer a matter of asking what the rules say, but a matter of what option best fits the current game and the current gaming group. If the rule option is a poor fit for one's own GMing style or a poor fit for your players, then the Wild Die may in fact be a problem. Find the proper fit, and the one on the Wild Die enhances the OpenD6 experience. In this article we will explore various mechanics for the one on the Wild Die, and help the gamemaster to evaluate the potential pros and cons of each option. We will examine critical failures, die penalties, complications, and simply ignoring ones as potential methods for resolving the Wild Die conundrum. This article will not evaluate the statistical probabilities of success and failures within those options. That subject was well covered in Ivan Erickson's article "Never Tell Me the Odds!" found in D6 Magazine issue #1.

The first option to consider is the often maligned critical failure. Whether around a gaming table or an RPG discussion board, the one equaling a critical failure is almost always brought into the conversation. Though most D6 gamers suggest that the critical failure is not the

rule, it might be best to check again. Though it is true that a one being a critical failure was not the predominant suggestion of D6 rule books for the majority of West End Game's publications, in 1996 *The D6 System* book changed that. Though it was not called a critical failure, on page eight it described a scenario where a character not only fails to dodge a bullet but trips and smashes his head into a nearby wall. Though West End Games did not use the term "critical failure" until later in the book, the thought of being hit by a bullet and taking blunt force trauma to the head as a result of a dodge roll certainly fits the description.

Subsequent OpenD6 and D6 variant books soften the critical failure's blow. In the D6 core books released in 2004, the rules suggest that gamemasters throw in complications based on the total results of the dice. That particular incarnation of the rules suggest a humorous "just barely made it" result for high rolls, and potentially dire consequences for low rolls. Saying nothing for rolls somewhere in the middle, calling the one a Critical Failure, at the very least, plants it in the gamemaster's mind that failing the roll and heaping on a complication is in order.

The Cinema Six game *Azamar* also uses a critical failure mechanic. That Wild Die mechanic suggests that every roll of a one should be treated as a failure. However, the initial one on the Wild Die is followed by a second roll to determine the degree of failure. On a subsequent 1-5 the character has simply failed. If the second roll is a 6, then there is a "significant failure."

Before a gamemaster fully commits to the critical failure option, she should weigh the options of the mechanic. In the critical failure there is just under a one in six chance of failing any given die roll. Depending on which rule variant the gamemaster uses, there is a 16.8% chance of an injurious or crippling blunder. Such mechanics may add thrill of inherent risk to every die roll, though they also confirm the fears of those who criticize the system. Certainly those efforts in *Azamar* and the core D6 books make some efforts to curb the potential damage of the critical failures, but exclusively using failure options for the one presents a problem to a noticeable quantity of gamers.

On the other side of the critical failures there are some notable benefits. A one on the Wild Die always equaling a failure provides the players with a consistent dynamic to the game. Further, some suggest that the potential failures

from the one on the Wild Die serve as a counterbalance for the potential for exploding sixes. In such thought the potential for dismal failure is the Yin to the exploding six's Yang. There is also an aspect of the failure representing the necessary risk when characters have extraordinarily high dice pools. There comes a point when, if a character does not have well balanced skills, it becomes necessary to introduce an element of risk. Critical failures when rolling a one can represent that risk. It also becomes easier to regard the one on the Wild Die as such when the gamemaster uses an additional mechanic, such as requiring a second roll, to soften the blow to a simple failure rather than a critical failure.

A second option for running ones on the Wild Die is to impose a simple penalty. Usually this penalty takes the form of subtracting two dice from the roll, the one and the highest roll. That is to say that if you are rolling 4D and the results are 3, 6, 4, and a 1 on the Wild Die, then you remove the 1 and 6, taking the total from 14 to a mere 7. This may not necessarily mean that the character fails, but it certainly reduces the chance of success.

This option offers several advantages. First, it is a simple mechanic that can be applied evenly, regardless of what kind of roll the player is making. For example, if your player is making an initiative roll, it is difficult to introduce a critical failure or a complication. Likewise, if your player is rolling damage, it is nonsensical to say that the damage failed significantly with a humorous complication. Thus the mechanic maintains the ability of being much more consistent than other applications of the Wild Die. In all circumstances, the player faces a potential loss on the roll. Though a character may be able to succeed fairly easily with her given dice pool, he cannot take success for granted since the dice pool may suddenly be reduced by 2D. Further, it requires less of the gamemaster. The GM is not under the pressure of suddenly having to search her brain for a relevant critical failure or complication. For the gaming group that requires consistency this could be the perfect choice for running ones on the Wild Die.

However, not all gaming groups are the same. Consistency

is not always prized as the primary virtue of running cinematic roleplaying games. Many players recount the complications and critical failures as some of the most memorable parts of their campaigns. Though the consistency of this option is fair and balanced, some groups find that it lacks the thrill of having to overcome unexpected obstacles. Gamers enjoy the struggle of taking on challenges; otherwise they would never have come to a gaming table in the first place. For groups that prefer a fly-by-the-seat-of-their-pants game, the die penalty may not add the spice that players want.



Next (and probably my favorite method of running the Wild Die) is the complication. Complications are often mistaken for critical failures. It isn't hard to see why, if there is a complication then that means something has gone wrong. If something has gone wrong, then that means your character didn't succeed, right? Well, not necessarily. Complications are those elements in life that the characters (and sometimes even

gamemasters) leave unaccounted. Complications simply make things more interesting and, obviously, more complicated. That is to say that a player can succeed at his roll, but encounter an unexpected dynamic. For example, a character is battling a large carnivorous plant and makes an attack with his sword. Suppose the roll comes out as a whopping 25, but still has a one on the Wild Die. Our hero should still hit his foe, but the gamemaster should introduce a new problematic element. Suppose that when the sword slashes into the plant, it hits a cavity that stores the plant's digestive enzymes, and now flesh-eating liquid splashes everywhere. The hero now has to make a dodge roll to avoid being hit by the spray. Or imagine your players are in a science fiction setting, engaged in a laser battle in a warehouse. One of the characters, in middle of the fight, rolls a one on the Wild Die in her *dodge* roll. Instead of taking the *D6 System* book's advice and having her get hit *and* take additional damage, allow her to succeed in her *dodge* roll. The gamemaster can describe a scenario where she dodges nimbly out of the way by diving behind a crate. However, it is only then she realizes that the crate is marked in bold red letters



reading, “EXPLOSIVES!” The next round things are likely to get much more complicated when her foes try to blast at her behind her newly found cover. A final example of a success with a complication comes from a recent game I ran. A character was infiltrating a space-pirate base and wanted to hard-wire a communications device to relay all enemy communications. He rolled his skill, with a one on the Wild Die, and I gave him a complication. I determined that he succeeded in tapping into all communications, but his scanner was flooded with an endless stream of chatter. Some of it was very helpful, much of it was not. It allowed him to monitor all base communications, but it also reduced any chance of sneaking around the base while the scanner was on.

Of course, when a player rolls a complication, we cannot always assume that they succeed in their roll. Failing with a complication can be viewed very similarly to a critical failure. On top of failing the roll, something additional happens alongside the failure. Alternatively, the character may fail spectacularly or in a humorous fashion. One example is when a party infiltrated a hanger filled with robot sentries. All of the characters made a *Perception* check after completing their *Stealth* check. One of the characters noticed something that all others had missed, but had also failed the *Stealth* check with a one on the Wild Die. The character, in her excitement, had forgotten to keep her voice low and exclaimed, “Hey guys, LOOK!” Another example is when a character fails a melee attack roll with a complication, he could lose his grip on the weapon and it flies across the room. Now he must spend part of next round reclaiming the weapon before he can properly resume the combat. Worse yet, he may be relying on his melee skills for his defense, and now his defenses are weaker until he can once again wield the weapon.

When creating complications, the gamemaster needs to keep a few guidelines in mind. First, they should be related to the failed roll. Unless there is some logical connection to the roll and the resulting complication, the complications become nothing more than nonsense thrown into the game at random. If a character were to roll a complication while hotwiring a vehicle, only to have a massive landslide block his intended route, then there is a disconnect between the complication and the roll used to create the complication. Second, gamemasters need to have the complication affect the person who made the roll, rather than it being a general party complication. Certainly things that have an effect on a player within the party will have secondary effects that make a difference to the other characters; nonetheless the primary effects should most closely influence the one who made the roll. It would ultimately be unfair if a player rolls a mishap and the

gamemaster decides that an attack misses and instead hits an adjacent player character. And last, the gamemaster should always make sure that the complications fit the tone of the game. Not only should they be appropriate to the genre, but if the adventure is in a gloomy crypt with an atmosphere of doom and dread, the complication should not be light hearted and funny, but instead a surprise moment.

This method carries an advantage of creating memorable moments of things going awry. Many players love to tell stories of the complications they have had. Many times I have met up again with one of my players that reminisces, saying, “Remember that time I was fighting those troops, and I rolled a one on the Wild Die?” The unexpected twists and turns with fun and imaginative play are part of what makes roleplaying enjoyable. In addition, when the players know that they are responsible, if only in part and albeit inadvertently, it gives them a sense of ownership of those twists and turns. In short, complications can be fun.

Unfortunately it is almost impossible to keep consistent when employing this method. Complications are difficult to employ when making initiative rolls or when calculating damage. Certainly one can use a device of a melee weapon breaking as a result of dealing damage, but such things are hard to implement when developing a mishap for ranged weapon damage. Furthermore, if the gamemaster were to consistently use the exact same complication, such as breaking a melee weapon every time the player rolls a one, then it will become tiresome. Also, it requires a swift thinking GM who can quickly and continually deal out relevant complications to his players. I have heard from plenty of gamemasters, “I just can’t think like that on the fly.” If that is the case, then this option is not the best primary choice for them. Another aspect to consider is that a player with bad luck one evening can easily feel disgruntled with complication after complication when confronted with several ones in quick succession. In all likelihood, a GM is not going to use this method exclusively. It is simply too difficult to apply complications that make sense, fit the setting, fit the mood, and are not so extreme as to punish the player every time the Wild Die shows a one. It is most likely that this application of the Wild Die will have to be used in conjunction with other methods of resolution.

The last standalone method of resolving the Wild Die is just to do nothing. When the one turns up, just add the total as you would any other die roll. This is presented as one option for the gamemaster in the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game: Second Edition Revised and Expanded*, and is the primary method advocated by AntiPaladin Games’ *Mini Six* rule set. When using this method, the six

still results in a re-roll, but the one carries no significance whatsoever.

The obvious benefit is that the players are not punished for their rolls, and there is no dread for reporting the one. It is a highly consistent method of running the game, and makes for quick resolution of die rolls. However, one can call into question whether this is a balanced resolution when considering that a player may have the potential for exploding sixes with no down side of having a Wild Die.

Which method is the right choice? That is much more difficult to determine. Largely, this is going to be an individual decision by the gamemaster. The players and GMs alike are in little position to argue, "The rules say that the Wild Die..." as the rules are hardly consistent. When playing *Star Wars*, the method of Wild Die resolution depends on which edition you are playing. The Second Edition recommends a mixed system where the player re-rolls the Wild Die. On a 1-5 the gamemaster imposes a penalty, whereas when a 6, the gamemaster introduces a complication. In the Revised and Expanded edition, the gamemaster may pick between penalties, complications, or ignoring the one, and there is no system to determine which he uses. Within the *D6 System* book, there is not even a consistent manner of describing the one within the text. Page eight describes a critical failure to the exclusion of all other methods, and page 28 provides the options of penalties or critical failures.

The Wild Die mechanic should be a reflection of the people sitting at the gaming table. If a group enjoys a game filled with complications, the gamemaster should help create an enjoyable atmosphere. If the players enjoy a game filled with more risk, then a critical failure method might be warranted. However critical failures and complications are, by nature, improvisational and to some degree subjective; they are not regulated by any pre-determined, balanced mechanic. Given the aforementioned facts, if a gaming group values consistency and objective methods of resolution, the gamemaster should consider other methods. With a system that promotes itself as having infinite possibilities, gamemasters should not feel locked into a single method of resolution, but should feel free to mix them up within his campaign. The D6 system and its variants are supposed to be fun. But if the players and gamemaster are not having fun then something has gone wrong. Perhaps the method, or combination of methods, the group is using should be changed. Whichever method or mix of methods the gamemaster uses, she should communicate that method to the players and make sure that there is an understanding among all parties. It is only a game when everyone has the same expectations for the rules.

In the end, remember that the Wild Die is not a punishment for the characters. It is not a time where gamemasters get to chuckle evilly at their chance to steal away the players' fun. It is a way of enhancing the game, and giving the system its own unique flavor. If the Wild Die is not fun, it is not doing its job. If the GM is using a method that is not helping the group enjoy the session, the GM is not doing his job. There are plenty of options to consider, whether it is the critical failure, the penalty, the complication, or just ignoring the one. The GM can choose an option or mix of options that enrich the game. The multiple methods of running the Wild Die add more flexibility to what the creators meant to be a flexible system. Just make sure you understand who is at your table, know what your personal and creative limits are, and weigh all of the options carefully. Game on!

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